

# Both sides of the donkey taxi debate

By **Adam Woodward** • Published: 01 Sep 2024 • 16:57 • 1 minute read



Donkey taking a rest after taking out tourist carriage.

**In recent months, the debate over the existence of the donkey taxis of Mijas Pueblo has reached new levels of tension, from public protests to a case of physical aggression.**

Mijas council imposed new rules in August limiting the times the donkey taxis could operate depending on weather warnings from AEMET, the national weather agency, and assured the public that the correct veterinary checks were being carried out to ensure the wellbeing of the donkeys.

Muleteers accused of flouting rules

According to animal rights groups, the council is not going far enough, oversight is lacking and the muleteers are flouting the rules. They draw attention to photos of donkeys carrying tourists who are clearly over the 80km limit (although one has to ask how

that could legally be enforced), photos of lesions on the donkeys' skin beneath the tack they wear and a viral video of a donkey collapsing from what appeared to be exhaustion. They therefore demand the immediate cessation of the activity and some even suggest replacing it with some sort of tuk tuk service while the donkeys are sent to a local sanctuary.

Claims protestors do not respect history

The muleteers, the donkey taxi operators, on the other hand, highlight the history of the donkey taxis in that in the 1960s, when the service first began, the initial idea was to save this unique Mijas breed of donkey after 90 were slaughtered when mechanical farming in the area became prevalent. They also refute claims of the tack causing lesions by saying that as the donkeys are male they therefore tend to be naturally more brutish, a reason they also give for them being kept on a short tether. The muleteers also claim that they ensure no one over 80kg mounts the donkeys, something that can be refuted by photos posted on social media groups.

While the debate remains heated, tensions are growing between local people of Mijas who see the donkey taxis as part of their heritage and income, and the protestors who are said to be predominantly of foreign origin. And in the centre of this controversy, Mijas council, who has said little on the subject throughout the summer months.

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